

One in seven Australians living in poverty, according to new report

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Poverty is increasing in Australia, with one in seven Australians living below the poverty line, according to a new report.

The *Poverty in Australia* report, to be released on Sunday by the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), also shows one in six Australian children are living in poverty.

The percentage of Australians and of Australian children living in poverty rose from 2010 to 2012.

The poverty line – defined as 50 per cent of median income – was \$400 a week for a single adult and \$841 for a couple with two children in 2012.

The report shows 13.9 per cent of Victorians live in poverty with those in non-metropolitan areas most likely to be below the poverty line.

In Melbourne 13.7 per cent of residents were in poverty compared to 15 per cent in Sydney, 13.9 per cent in Brisbane, 13.8 per cent in Hobart, 12.4 per cent in Perth and 11.5 per cent in Adelaide.

Single mother-of-three Vicky Vacondios, who receives Newstart payments and lives in public housing in Reservoir, said most of her income is spent on food, petrol and clothing for her children.

"People are very quick to judge," she said. "I didn't choose to be a single parent."

Ms Vacondios, a former gaming attendant, is trying to start her own business offering mentoring for women trying to escape homelessness and domestic violence.

"There is a lot of stress," she said. "People living in hardship can find it hard to go in to work or get out of bed. There are so many reports about jobs being lost, payments being cut."

The ACOSS report showed Tasmania had the highest poverty rate of any state at 15.1 per cent.

"These findings paint a disturbing picture that we as a community need to confront if we are to reverse the spreading disparity we are seeing on the ground in the daily lives of people across the country," ACOSS chief executive Cassandra Goldie said.

"It will take leadership from our elected representatives and governments who must ensure that addressing poverty is central to public policy making."

The research deducts housing costs such as rent and mortgage payments before calculating median income. This allows a comparison between households' ability to meet basic living costs other than housing.

The ACOSS report, based on analysis of Bureau of Statistics data on income and expenditure for 2011-12, comes days after the release of new figures showing families in outer-suburban, low-income seats were hardest hit by the Abbott government's May budget.

Research by the University of Canberra's National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling found 15 of the 16 hardest hit electorates are Labor-held seats in Sydney and Melbourne.

Households in Calwell, on Melbourne's north-west fringe, will be \$783 a year worse off compared to \$249 in Kooyong.

St Vincent de Paul chief executive John Falzon said: "This report, rather than making us feel demoralised, should

make us feel determined.

"Especially in the light of the lacerating measures proposed in the 2014 federal budget, this report is an important weapon in our fight for justice."

Thirty per cent of Australians who receive social security payments live below the poverty line, including 55 per cent of those on unemployment benefits. Fifteen per cent of aged pensioners live in poverty.

Women are slightly more likely to live in poverty than men while single parents, people with disabilities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are significantly more likely to live in poverty.

This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/one-in-seven-australians-living-in-poverty-according-to-new-report-20141011-11401b.html>